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Leroy Garrett, Editor

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"This is the covenant that I will make with them in those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts and write them on their minds." *Hebrews 10:16*

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The Church of Christ: Yesterday and Today. . .

IS THE CHURCH UNDER THE GREAT COMMISSION?

There are at present about 42,000 Protestant missionaries scattered around the world, several hundreds of these coming from our own Church of Christ-Christian Church ranks. Most all of these, we presume, would say they are helping to execute the Great Commission as given by our Lord: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Missionary societies, both large and small, number into the hundreds, and most of them write it into their constitutions that carrying out the Great Commission is their foremost aim. And it is a frequent experience of any church-goer to hear the Great Commission elegantly quoted and vigorously applied to the church's task of taking the gospel to all the world.

It will no doubt appear presumptuous on my part, therefore, to question this interpretation of the Great Commission. In doing so I am by no means questioning the missionary spirit, which any disciple of Jesus must surely cherish in his heart. It is not a question as to whether a believer is to share his faith with others or as to whether the gospel is to be preached to every soul on earth. Jesus was God's great missionary to this earth, and that spirit must be in us all. A *silent* Christian is an anomaly. Someway and somehow, however stumbling and awkward he may be, he will share faith that is precious to him. That great preacher who made famous the phrase "the impulsive power of a new affection" touched upon an important truth. Man talks about what is in his heart, and he cannot help but share a new affection, whether it be his first sweetheart or a new golf swing. How much more will he talk about Jesus, the new affection that has changed his life, when the impulsive power of his love is at work in his heart.

So this is not a question as to whether the church is to bear witness to its faith. The question is whether we are under the obligation imposed by the Great Commission. The question is not trivial. Not only does it involve a proper understanding of the church's mission in our time. The conclusions we shall reach in this study will not only spare us some glaring inconsistencies in reference to what we say and do (or *not* do) about the Great Commission, but may also help to correct some woeful misapplication of scripture.

Let's start with the new brother in Christ who is diligently studying the Bible in an effort to determine God's will for his life. Since he has recently responded to the gospel his eyes fall upon Mk. 16:15-1 6 with deeper appreciation: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." It is clear enough to him that the sinner is to believe and be baptized. He has done this and praises God that he can now claim Jesus as the Lord of his life. How about the rest of the passage?

Is this brother to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature? That is what it says do, and if it applies to him, then he had better get going. This may mean quitting his job and leaving his family, but if that is God's commission to *him,* then he needs to "get a gait" on him, as they say up in Tennessee. It says Go! and he needs to get with it. And I've heard scores of preachers quote the passage with lots of vim in the Go!, fully accepting the order as applying to themselves and their congregations, and with no one making a move to leave town, then or later. They've conditioned themselves to suppose that they are carrying out the Great Commission when they send $5.00 a month to Bangkok.

I would say that our new brother *is* obligated to share his faith with others. He may be telling his parents about Jesus, and he will find chances to say a word to the fellows at work. But this is not what the Great Commission says. It says to go and make disciples of all the nations. It is a commission that embraces the entire human race. It is ridiculous to suppose that brother, or a whole congregation like him, is under any such obligation. "Oh, but is he doing his part in carrying out the Great Commission by preaching to those where he is," some-one insists, contending that other believers will take care of other parts of the world." But that is not what our Lord was talking about in the Great Commission. He told *somebody* to go into all the world and preach, and one does not do this by staying at home and preaching to his neighbors and kin. I believe that our new brother could stay at home the rest of his life and serve the Lord faithfully without going anywhere, but I couldn't believe that if I believed him to be under the Great Commission. Just as I believe that those to whom the commission was given had to go, and they could not have pleased God by staying home, however much they preached.

But we are told that while none of us may be *personally* obligated to the Great Commission, the church as a whole is, and we are to see to it that all nations are evangelized by sending missionaries. While I appreciate any church for its missionary zeal, and no excuse ever needs to be made for a passion for souls, I hardly see how the Commission can be given any such application. In giving the commission Jesus was talking to *individuals,* a group of select men that he called apostles, and he tells them what *they* were to do. It was not something they were to assign to others while they stayed at home.

Is it not a bit ridiculous for a congregation to assume itself to be executing the Great Commission simply by sending money somewhere? They may well be a people who do little or no *personal* witnessing for Jesus, looking to their hired minister to do that for them. But they have a "missions committee" and a missions budget," and they (or the preacher) glibly quote the Great Commission as the basis for their concern. They sing "Fling out the banner' let it float skyward and seaward, high and wide; the sun that lights its shining folds, the cross on which the Savior died," and suppose themselves to be really with it by way of "our man in Tokyo." Anything that any congregation does for a missionary I say, thank God, and surely they will be blessed but it is amiss for them to

associate that with the Great Commission. It is simply a matter of helping a preacher who wants to evangelize abroad. It has nothing to do with their personal obligation to share their faith and it has nothing to do with the Great Commission.

The Great Commission was an apostolic commission, and it was given only to the apostles, not to the church. Just as Mt. 16:19 was only to the apostles (and perhaps Peter in particular): "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven." The apostles, and only the apostles, could loose and bind on earth as if heaven itself were doing it. The church has never had such authority. The apostles were chosen envoys, diplomats of heaven with full authority, and they received commissions that no other mortals have ever received. We have cited two of them. To impose the Great Commission upon the church would be no different from imposing the authority to bind and loose sins.

The scriptures make it clear that when God gives a commission to a man He always equips him with the power to execute it. Jesus is the noblest example of that: his commission was unique and so his powers of execution were unique. Moses was given a mission that would stagger the best of men, and even he was but a child in the face of it. God equipped him for his mission to Egypt. And so with all the prophets. Each had his unique commission, and God gave each only the power that was needed. So with the apostles and the Great Commission. How staggering it was in its embrace! There they were, twelve ignorant, frightened men who had never been anywhere, being told to visit the capitals of the world and stand before peasant and monarch alike and tell the good news of the gospel. Paul must have spoken for them all when he later wrote in 2 Cor. 4:7: "We are only the earthenware jars that hold this treasure, to make it clear that such an overwhelming power comes from God and not from us." And he also said to that church what could be said of no one but an apostle: "You have seen done among you, all the things that mark the true apostle unfailingly produced: the signs, the marvels, the miracles" (2 Cor. 12:12).

As ambassadors of heaven (2 Cor. 5:20) the apostles were endowed with plenipotentiary authority. They could seal their mission with signs from heaven, with miracles and marvels. And they had the gift of speaking the languages of earth. Thus equipped they set out upon the grandest mission ever given to man. And anyone so charged would have to be so equipped.

That commission was executed by the apostles and their duly appointed assistants, evangelists. The gospel circled the then-known world like a golden belt of glory. In Col. 1:23 Paul could speak of the Good News as that "Which has been preached to the whole human race." If that is made to refer only to the Mediterranean world, subsequent history indicates that the apostles and their assistants finally reached distant kingdoms. And 1 Tim.

3:16 exalts the Christ as being "preached among the nations." Rom. 16:26 refers to the gospel as being made known among all the nations.

The apostles have done their work, once for all. The Great Commission has been fulfilled, not only in the apostolic mission of the first century, but in the story that they left the world in their writings. The gospel is now a matter of record. It is there, in a book and in all the languages of the world, for anyone to read. Bless them, they did what heaven commissioned them to do, and it is a work that need not and cannot be repeated. Talk about "fulfilling the Great Commission in our time" only betrays an ignorance of the apostolicity of the church. For the church today to want everyone to know about Christ is one thing, but for it to assume the Great Commission is folly.

Actually, no missionary effort today can be in the same class with the apostolic mission, for the situation is so different. No one today can preach the gospel in the same sense the apostles did, for in their time it was *unknown* and *unwritten.* They were evangels bringing the Good News before unheralded. In my hometown of Denton, in my state of Texas, in my county, and in my country, and in most all of the world I would have difficulty finding a person that has not heard of Jesus the Christ, and they all have knowledge of the basic facts of the gospel, whether they believe or not. I cannot therefore *proclaim* the gospel as the apostles did. It is already proclaimed and known the world over —and what better tribute is there to the success of the apostolic mission? The greatest testimonial of all are the Bible societies that issue the, gospel story in thousands of languages. Those who may not yet know of the Christ can be handed a copy of the *proclaimed* gospel, as recorded by the apostles.

The scholars who have written about the word *gospel* are agreed that the original words in Greek, and there are three of them in particular, indicate two important things about the nature of the gospel: it is *good* and it is *news.* Good News! A message already known may still be good, but it cannot be *news.* So one can really preach the gospel as the apostles did only when he is bringing *news, good* news, about what God has done for us through Jesus. That is a rare experience in our time.

This means that our task in reference to the gospel is different from that of the apostles. We are to *impress* the claims of the gospel upon those who are but vaguely conscious of it. We are to *remind* people of it, including the church itself, as did Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:1), though it would be absurd to speak of preaching the Good News to the church, for it is already evangelized. We are to *persuade* people to obey the gospel, which includes instruction on how this is to be done. We are to *defend* the gospel from those who would pervert it. But, strictly speaking, we do not *preach* the gospel, for it has already been preached and recorded. If anyone may not have heard, we would only need to hand him a copy of the New Covenant scriptures.

It would follow, I presume, that if a person knows nothing about the gospel and has never heard of Jesus the Messiah, then one would be making known the Good News on a basis similar to the apostles, and this may be the case in some dark corners of the earth. But it still isn't quite the same so long as we have the written gospel to hand them, even if they are illiterate. We would teach them to read so that they could know the gospel! But until the apostles executed the Great Commission the most literate of the world could not and did not know, for it had not yet been proclaimed and recorded.

We live in a world that has some knowledge of the gospel, but it is a world that does not *realize* the gospel. Many do not really understand what it is all about, and so they need to be taught further about the Good News that they have absorbed as if by osmosis from their culture. "Christ died for your sins" is not going to be news to people that we contact, but the implications of it, the responsibilities of it, the blessings of it, and the claims of it are vitally relevant, and this is our task. But, if you are prepared for it, this is *not* preaching the gospel. It is teaching, admonition, and exhortation in reference to the facts that are already known.

We all understand, of course, that there is an important difference between knowing *about* Jesus and knowing him as a person and as the Lord of our life. And this is true of those in the church as well as others, and so we need to impress upon the church itself what the gospel really means to our lives. Even those who have obeyed the gospel can have a legalistic view of religion, and so they need to come to see the Jesus who is our sin-bearer. This is why Elton Trueblood can say that the church itself is the greatest mission field in the world.

Those of our own people who still labor under the impression that all of the New Covenant scriptures constitute the gospel, and thus equate the apostolic proclamation with apostolic doctrine, will see only nonsense in what I am saying. That would also make nonsense of the Great Commission, for if Good News that was to be proclaimed embraced all of what is now in the New Covenant scriptures, then the apostles went forth with an educational program rather than "the thing preached," as Paul describes it in 1 Cor. 1:21, or "the message preached" as another version gives it. The gospel is clearly outlined in 1 Cor.15:1-5, and if this is not properly distinguished from "the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42), then there is much more fouled up than the thesis presented here.

If then the Great Commission is only an apostolic charge, is there a commission to the church or individual believers in reference to preaching? Strangely enough, the scriptures say but little in reference to this. One cannot turn to passages where the saints are instructed to proclaim the Word. The emphasis is upon the church edifying itself. In really being the Body of Christ it seems to be taken for granted that the church will grow. It is assumed that the believers will share their faith. Believers are to be the light of the world, and in being light those who want freedom from darkness will find their way to them.

By implication we can say that the commission that each of us has is to tell others what God has done for us. This is what Jesus said to one of his disciples who would have gladly gone on a worldwide mission. The Gadarene demoniac was ready to follow Jesus anywhere once he was freed from his prison among the tombs. Jesus said to him: "Go back home, and report all that God has done for you" (Lk. 8:39). Here is a commission that fits us all. The demoniac was all gung-ho for something like the Great Commission, but the Lord was better pleased for him to share his faith in his own neighborhood.

There is, of course, the commission to evangelists to "Preach the word" and "Do the work of an evangelist," but this could hardly be applied to all believers. That there is a special work for the evangelist is evident enough, and it is unfortunate that this is so often confused with what the located minister does, which is not a recognized function in the scriptures, and, for the most part, supplants what the shepherds (elders) of the flock should be doing.

At the very close of the scriptures there is what might be called the great commission to the church: "The Spirit and the Bride say, *Come*. Let every one who listens answer, *Come*. Then let all who are thirsty come: all who want it may have the water of life, and have it free: (Rev. 22:17). That simplifies it for us all. No big deal. We don't have to take the next jet to Russia. We can all say *Come* to any and all we know who are thirsty. We can invite them to Jesus, which is the most glorious invitation ever extended. And once we look at it that way, that our mission is to invite people to us, we will see that the invitation can just as well be extended to many of those who are in the church as well as out. *Come!* is a plea based as much or more upon what we are as what we say. And *Come!* is an unending invitation, for however near or far one may be from his likeness, he can always come nearer. *Come* I will invite some to repentance and baptism, while to others, even those who have long professed him, it will be an invitation to accept him as sin-bearer and to cast all their anxieties upon him.

How's that for a great commission for us all? Once accepted, we can give the Great Commission back to its rightful owners.—*the Editor*

The commission ends with a promise of the unceasing invisible presence of the authoritative Lord with his disciples to the close of the age. Then, as Matthew has already informed his readers elsewhere in his gospel, the Son of man will be visibly present to his people in the kingdom of God. Meanwhile, both their responsibilities and their resources have been made available by the risen Lord for the fulfillment of their appointed task.—*Howard Clark Kee*

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WHY I AM NOT A "LIBERAL"

I intend for this to be as personal and candid as if it were a personal letter to you, my reader friend. It may turn out to merit the same evaluation that one follower gave Nixon's *Six Crises* some years ago. "The book may even be more candid that Mr. Nixon realizes," he observed, noting that the former vice-president may have said more than he intended. Let's just call this a one-sided heart to heart talk. I want to share with you some things that I believe, whether I'm given credit for them or not, if indeed credit is relevant. I am reminded of Emmanuel Kant's dictum that our behavior should always be praiseworthy, whether it ever be praised or not. To be *worthy* of praise is the point, not the praise. And it is an irony of history that those who are worthy of praise are seldom praised (until after they are dead), while the applause and acclaim goes to the superficial, the preservers of the *status quo,* and the men-pleasers. What history has done here suits me. I have now passed the point where approval from men has any special appeal. That is just as well! If in *that* day Jesus says to me, "Well done, Leroy . . ." that will be my glory. I'll settle for, "*Well tried, Leroy. . .*"

I am going to talk about why I am not a "liberal," a label that has been pinned on me long since, and one that fits me about like *charismatic* would fit Nixon. Reading some of the brotherhood war bulletins through the years, I have often remarked to Ouida, in view of some of the things I have been called, "If *I* am a liberal, then what would a real liberal be!" While I am not much given to labels, the term *liberal* does have some meaning, and I suppose we have some liberals among us, which is not necessarily bad. The liberals are my brothers as well as others, and I love them just as much. I just happen to believe that I am not one of them, except that we are in Jesus together and that of course is what really matters.

One Easter season when I was at Harvard the faculty-student committee in arranging for a special program thought it appropriate that the speaker should be one who believed the Easter story, which drastically reduced the possibilities in that particular Harvard community in those days. The lot fell upon "that tall guy from Texas" since it was apparent that the empty tomb did indeed have special meaning to me. They didn't know that I really didn't believe in "Easter" either, but I did believe in the risen Christ, so that qualified me to address both faculty and students, all of whom had two degrees or more, on that memorable occasion.

I took my text, not from the Bible, but from Goethe, where he has one of his infidel characters say, upon hearing the toll of the Easter bells, "I hear your message, but I cannot believe." My thesis was that old Faust could have believed if he wanted to, for the evidence warrants acceptance of the resurrection story. I then recounted from the scriptures

the occasions that the risen Jesus appeared to people, and analyzed the testimony of those who said "We have seen the Lord" somewhat as a jurist would in a court of law. My case was buttressed by the study made by old Prof. Greenleaf, years before, at the Harvard Law School. After examining the witnesses as only a lawyer could, the law professor concluded that there was no way that the testimony could be impeached. It was a dramatic moment in my life, with the likes of Prof. Henry Cadbury sitting before me, when I pointed to the towers of the law school across the way, and said, with an open Bible held aloft, "Dr. Greenleaf, speaking as a jurist, assures us that the testimony of the evangelists would stand up in any court of this land. So, as the Easter bells toll this day we can believe if we want to." I was at Harvard and I had Harvard on my side! But I have found that that is like being at Abilene or Nashville and having Campbell and Lipscomb on my side!

My Unitarian colleagues filed by with respect for my sincerity. One of them leaned toward my ear and said quietly, "I heard your message, but I cannot believe!" Prof. Cadbury, always mild-mannered and peaceful, took my hand and smiled, saying nothing, which was about like exploding a firecracker in my face. But they had always said that they didn't care what we believed so long as we could make a reasonable defense. I stated my case and they listened, so I guess we can leave it at that. But I had to report to Ouida that night, who was then a working girl, that I supposed I had done nothing more than to assure my reputation as "the conservative of the conservatives."

Whether at Harvard or in my own university classroom as a professor, I have never had the slightest misgivings about the great fundamentals of the Christian faith, and these are all precious to me in my own personal prayer and study. I often thank the Father for Jesus, for making him both the Lord and the risen Christ. As a college teacher I have often given testimony to my faith in Jesus as Lord and my assurance that God raised him from the dead. And I have laid a concerned hand on the shoulder of many students, bearing witness to how Jesus lives for me *in the Now* and that he can live for them too.

The scriptures are dear to me in that they are the revealed word of God. I am aware of the problems that disturb a lot of people, but they do not bother me. It may well be that Isaiah is of dual authorship with one part later than the other, or that Daniel was written in the time of the Maccabees, but it is nonetheless God's word to me. I suppose there are conflicts in the resurrection narratives, but they say to me what this whole thing is all about: *He* is *Lord and he* is *risen!* I find theories on inspiration awfully boring, and since the scriptures give us the fact of inspiration, I have no particular interest in the how of it. Men can speculate, but I choose to keep believing.

And I believe in the *objectivity* of God's revelation, which is in line with the church's faith through the centuries. That is, God was really, objectively in Jesus, reconciling the world to Himself. Jesus is *distinctively* the Son of God, unlike any other person ever. He existed even before Abraham as the eternal Logos. He was the Wisdom that the Greek

philosophers anticipated. He became flesh and tabernacled among men, thus reflecting the resplendent glory and majesty of the Father. His relations with people—slaves, prostitutes, children, women, clergy, lepers, disciples, the masses—wherein we have both his teaching and his example is the greatest revelation imaginable, and I revel in its mystery and richness. This revelation was vouchsafed to his chosen envoys and only to them. I cannot believe that he continues to reveal his will in some *subjective* manner to those in every age who dream dreams and see visions. I may have sympathy for those who speak "by the Spirit" in the King James vernacular and confuse their texts in doing so, and I certainly do not favor excluding them from the fellowship, but I do not buy all that I hear. But I do read, "At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son." That's for me!

I revel in the scriptures because they tell me about Jesus, and I want to be more like him. And they speak of God in history, of how He rules in the kingdoms of men and places over them whom He will. Nebuchadnezzar was his battle ax and Cyrus was his anointed, though both pagan kings. He "called" Babylon from the north to discipline His people and the Assyrians became "the rod of my anger." At will He summoned ravens to feed His servants and locusts to punish his people. He is the God of history and a history-making God. And so He is present in our history, ruling in the affairs of men so as to realize His ultimate will. The Jews are still his "chosen" people and we cannot read Ro. 9-11 without realizing that God is up to something in the ongoing of history, not only in the eventual conversion of the Jews but in a triumph of righteousness that defies the imagination. So, I look forward to God's ultimate victory in history upon this earth, call it a millennium or what you will. I cannot believe that the prophetic cries for a kingdom in which men learn war no more and where the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the sea has yet come to this earth, though I do see the community of God as a reflection of that kingdom.

I therefore see the universe as open-ended rather than as a closed system. God can and does change things. He can and does intervene. There are powers in the universe that we know little or nothing about, including those within ourselves. I like Kant, to quote him again, when he says that the things that amazed him most were the starry heavens above and the moral law within man. I am naive enough to believe that the Ruler of the universe hears my prayers and responds to them. Prayer can and does change things. The universe itself testifies to the goodness and morality of God. I am as far from the presumptions of nihilism, secularism and skepticism as day is from night. While I believe in giving such philosophies of despair a fair trial in the classroom, it is evident to my students that I believe in an ordered universe ruled over by a loving Being.

I see in the universe spiritual beings as well as physical, and they are of such magnitude as to surpass our imagination. They are in some way for our service and glory, but there are evil ones as well as good. Demons are surely both real and present. We will one day be impressed with the *reality* of the spirit world, and we will then see that it has always been much nearer us than we supposed. Gabriel is as much a being as Lincoln. Maybe not a *person* like Lincoln, but a real being, a created reality. And so with Satan. In view of scripture I see him as an intelligent reality, pervading the universe with frightening power, and not just an idea. It is all a mysterious drama between the forces of good and evil, with armies gathered in confrontation, and all of us as God's community upon earth, are caught up in this struggle. Without faith it would be impossible to contemplate, but we have the assurance that Christ and his servants will be triumphant.

And that assurance that is our anchor is a simple trusting faith that God is and that He rewards with victory all those who seek Him. Faith may begin in the acceptance of such factual propositions that Jesus is the Christ, but it matures into trust. Faith is thus a childlike conviction that God will do what He says, that He will make good all His promises.

I believe that the Holy Spirit in our lives is the continuing presence of Jesus, that through the heavenly Guest he is as much with us as he was ever with Peter, James and John. That Spirit not only comforts and strengthens us, but his presence serves as a guarantee that we have been purchased of God and that He will indeed give us redeemed bodies in a reality beyond this world.

Heaven will in some way be a complement of our existence here. Even suffering may play its role in preparing us for both service and devotion. I do not expect to walk on golden streets or be propelled about on angel's wings. I expect to be in God's presence, and the prospects of looking upon His glory is almost too much even to contemplate, but in some way it will be so. I will see my Savior in all his majestic reality. He will have (and does have) a body, and by then God will have given me a body too "like unto his glory". And some way, somehow we will be in God's service. It is all breathtakingly exciting, but don't you think that I don't believe it. I have laid claim to the promises, and I'm bound for glory!

God's community is dear to my heart. I have deep faith in the one, holy, catholic, apostolic church, and each of those adjectives are *big* in my thinking. But the church on earth will never be like "the spirits of just men made perfect," and so it will always be in need of reform. I therefore think of myself as part of the reformed tradition and thus a *reformer*, as we all should be, allowing the reformation to begin always and continue always with ourselves. I see the Body of Christ as one by nature, but it is a unity that has been raped by sectism, and so we must labor to restore that lost oneness.

I see the Church of Christ (and I am not bothered by the term *denomination* in this context) as part of God's community upon earth, the most that could be claimed of any group in a Christian world cursed by division. I am pleased to be where I am, and I have always thought it remarkable that by the circumstance of birth I should have landed in the right church! Had God "let me down" amongst the Lutherans or the Presbyterians, I might see it differently. And surely there are disciples in all the sects that desire to make the church what it ought to be, and I suppose they should remain where they are and work for reform in their own context. But we are working with *ideals*, whether in unity, ethics, ministry or missions, and we must realize that we can only approximate those ideals at best.

I see man as "crowned with glory and honor" and as a creature in God's image, and yet I am all too well aware of his fallenness. I agree with Niebuhr's way of putting it: "Man is a strange mixture of good and evil." And Ferre may be right in adding "But he has the drag of evil upon him." And as I grow older I can appreciate Campbell's analysis: "As I grow older I am more and more impressed with the majesty of God and the frailty of man." But God did not create us to be self-sufficient: We are not suppose to be gods. He intends to help us. And man is capable of so much if he will but draw upon the powers that God has given him. But I doubt if many people ever really come to see the real nature of sin and the toll that it takes in their lives. What was true of old Nebuchadnezzar is generally true of the human race: "His heart grew swollen with pride, and his spirit stiff with arrogance." I have labored in both the church and in the world, and have sort of "walked with kings" in university centers, and I have seen enough pride to last me several lifetimes; but I fear that I have seen more arrogance in the church than in the world. Pride is almost the whole story of sin, and it is a tragedy when one can see it in others but not in himself. Pride keeps man from seeing the depths of his own sin, and it keeps him from seeing Jesus, who is the only answer there is to such sin.

Finally, I must say that I am an optimist about the whole of human existence, perhaps a *chastened* optimist, but an optimist just the same. Dewey used the word *meliorist* to identify the view that takes the world realistically in all its evil and suffering, but still believes that truth will out and that there is a destiny that shapes our ends. "God is on His throne and all is well with the world" is saying too much, but it is true that God rules and that ultimate victory is assured. The fact of life that chastens me most is the magnitude of human suffering and misery, and I can understand why Buddhism would make this problem central in its concerns. I consider it the weightiest of all philosophical and theological problems, as to why a good and powerful God allows so much suffering in a world over which He has control. Years of study convinces me that there is no answer apart from a childlike faith that in another world everything will be set straight, including a reckoning of those who have perpetrated gross injustices against the innocent.

This means that I can see the likes of Watergate in a rather positive light. God can use it to teach us and to make us stronger because of it. And perhaps to humble us. It is not, of course, either the beginning or the end of sin in Washington, and it is likely that we have made too much of it, bad as it is. It indicates that we have lost our perspective when we become overly wrought up over one evil and rather indifferent to things far worse. Sins of racism have never bothered us as much as Watergate, for example. World starvation has not exactly got us worked up, and some national leaders a generation ago showed more patience toward Hitler's treatment of the Jews than some now show toward Nixon's handling of Watergate. Moral wisdom calls for distinguishing between evils. Child abuse, which is becoming a national problem, may be far more offensive to God than all the folly of Watergate.

In any event we should allow for due process and not presume a man to be guilty before he has his day in court. Our media, including some in the church, should learn from the Stans-Mitchell acquittal. The jury found two of our leaders innocent that we had already hanged on Haman's gallows! I don't believe in poking fun at our national leaders or in caricaturing our President. The Bible tells us to honor the king and to pray for our rulers (kings were not paragons of virtue in those days either!), but we have done little honoring and apparently too little praying. On several occasions my dear wife has prayed for President Nixon beside our bed at night, calling him by name and asking God to guide him. That is not only tender but it is right. She is right however right or wrong Nixon may be. Indeed, if he is all wrong in this, then Ouida is all the righter in praying for him, for it is those who are in the wrong that need God's help the most. Besides, it is obeying God to pray for and honor our leaders. We are to criticize, yes, but with respect and in the fear of God. If one believes that it is God who makes men kings and presidents, then it is amiss to take much of the judgment into our own hands.

Well, enough of this. All of this of course proves that I am not a liberal! Really, now, how can one be a liberal who believes in the being of God, the unique sonship of Jesus and his resurrection, miracles, heaven and hell, the inspiration of the Bible, the catholicity of the church, the fallenness of man, the indwelling of the Spirit, angels and demons, a millennium, a spiritual universe, and the objective revelation of God?

It is true that I accept all those who believe in Jesus and obey him in baptism as my brothers, which is another way of identifying the only church there is, scattered amongst a sectarian world. If that makes me a liberal, then most all of our pioneers were liberals before me.

It is true that I don't believe in making our private opinions, like having a Sunday School or using instrumental music, tests of fellowship, but if that makes me a liberal then the Restoration Movement was founded on liberalism, for from its inception its intention was to create a fellowship based only on what is clearly set forth in scripture.

Really, I don't object to name-calling all this much. This is just my way to get folk to think about what they are saying. As the terms are usually understood, I *am* a conservative in more ways than I am a liberal, but I might one day come back with a piece on why I am a liberal. I would be a liberal in education, social action (but not in economics), freedom concepts, and international relations. I might one day explain, for instance, why I vote for "liquor by the drink" even though I don't drink liquor, or why this very day in Texas I will vote for the right of communities to decide on parimutuel betting, in spite of a vigorous campaign of the Baptists (which is our state church!) against it, even though I haven't the slightest desire to bet on a nag. Here I am definitely a liberal. Does the Church of Christ stand with the Baptists on the betting issue?, *you* ask. Why don't you know that Church of Christ folk in Texas don't vote. They may bet but they won't vote!—*the Editor*

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OUR BAPTIST-EDUCATED BIBLE PROFESSORS

It is a little realized fact, and an interesting one, that a score or more of our Bible teachers in Church of Christ colleges have graduate degrees from Baptist institutions, especially New Orleans Baptist Seminary and Southwestern Baptist Seminary. While our folk do have two graduate schools of divinity, whether called that or not, neither of them offers a doctorate. And it is well that these men have their proper academic titles. It is noteworthy that they have disproportionately selected Baptist schools for this, even though Baptist-Church of Christ relations have been less than exemplary. Certainly no emphasis is placed upon the fact that when our youth traverse several states to get a "Christian education" that their Bible teacher will likely be Baptist-educated!

A fresh brochure out of Searcy reveals that of the 14 men who make up the Bible faculty of Harding College, five of them hold (or are candidates for) doctorates from Baptist seminaries, four of them from New Orleans and one from Southwestern. One other holds a Th. M. from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, which is the school's official name, though in the brochure Baptist is dropped, which may be an oversight, or it may be an effort to disturb the rhythm of Baptist, Baptist, Baptist as one's eye makes its way down the list. In fact J.D. Bales is the only one in the list that has a non-Baptist doctorate.

Abilene Christian College's Bible department is doused with Baptist doctorates in about the same percentage, though it is well represented with men with titles from the likes of Chicago, Harvard, and Vanderbilt. But as the finger moves down the roster of ACC's Bible teachers one would suppose that there was a concerted effort to have as many men from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary as possible. I came up with nine at my

last count, and, to be fair, one should add that they represent some of the very best men on the faculty.

This is probably more circumstantial than intentional. Finances and convenience have no doubt dictated some of this. Too, our men want a conservative education, which most Baptist institutions provide. Some too, I presume, cannot always make their way into the more reputable institutions. And there is nothing wrong with any of these reasons. I am only trying to explain a fact that must appear very curious to an observer, especially those who know that we have through the years been rather anti-Baptist. Indeed a generation ago none of these colleges would allow a Baptist-doctored teacher get near its faculty. And it is still a fact that we do not generally acknowledge Baptists to be Christians, even though they, like ourselves, are immersed believers. This was not the case, however, in the earlier years of our Movement.

This is a plea for a little more honesty toward the Baptists and others, and of course with each other. No doubt but what these men educated in Baptist schools have been wonderfully blessed, and in many instances they have probably enjoyed fellowship and freedom that excels that of their own faculty. And they likely believe they are studying with Christians in spite of a few obvious differences (and where would there be no differences?). If they in turn would reach *out* and accept these people as brothers, not because they are Baptists but because they are in Christ, as the Baptists have accepted them, it would be an important step toward unity. If they would make it clear to their students that the church includes all those who believe in Jesus and are baptized, and not just our own crowd, it would help. But we continue for the most part to leave the impression that Baptists are really outsiders and need conversion as much as any pagan. Why should not the Baptist-educated teachers in our schools take a lead in this direction?

And we could be a little more honest in the matter of fellowship. If the Baptists are giving a large number of our college professors their graduate education so that they can better serve in Church of Christ colleges, that would come close to being what fellowship is all about. If the “giving and receiving” between Paul and the Philippians was *koinonia*, so it is when the Southern Baptist Convention foots the bill to educate teachers for Harding and Abilene. If our professors can spend years studying with Baptists in New Orleans and Ft. Worth, then surely our people could be encouraged to ‘lisit special programs at Baptist churches or attend a Graham crusade. And to share in prayer groups and house meetings with them. We are playing some kind of game in being so exclusive as to have no contact with Baptists when our own colleges are staffed with men educated in their seminaries.

And if the teachers themselves can go to such schools, as well as to secular universities of every description, without being hopelessly tainted, then maybe our youth should be given more freedom in deciding where they will get their education. The example of our

Baptist-educated professors would indicate that one can receive “Christian education” at places other than Church of Christ institutions.

Baptists are my brothers, some of them surely, for they too love and obey Jesus. And I can agree with Alexander Campbell that it is a tragedy that in our earlier history we separated from each other. There is of course no such thing as a Baptist Church or “Church of Christ” in God’s sight. There is only one church, never was but one, and never will be but one. We obviously have work to do in restoring to that church the beauty of oneness that He has given it. And I rather think that this fellowship in education at the seminary level will help to move us in that direction. And to make us a little more honest about it all. In the meantime it may be just as well to thank our Baptist brothers for educating our preacher-training teachers for us!—*the Editor*

Our heavenly Father estimates men according to the state of their affections and passions, not according to the state of their understandings or the amount of their knowledge.—A. Campbell, *Mill. Harb.* , vol. 9, p. 567.

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OFFICE NOTES

Ouida and I will be sharing in a busy summer. She will go with me to the 9th Annual Unity Forum in Nashville, July 4-6, to be held on the campus of Scarritt College. We are looking forward not only to the program itself, which brings together a fine group of thinkers and speakers, but to seeing those here and there across the country who plan to be there for it. It is not too late for you to be with us. Call Stan Hime at 615-297-4043 for any information you may need, or simply be there at 7 p.m., July 4, in the college chapel for the opening session. That night you will hear Bob Fife of Milligan College and David Bobo of Indianapolis discuss the nature of the united church. The following evening Perry Gresham of Bethany and I will discuss our historic heritage. Three panel discussions will be held Friday and Saturday in nearby Moorman Auditorium, featuring Edward Fudge, Thomas Langford, Fred Hall, Max Foster, Ed Neely Cullum, James L. Barton, Claire E. Berry, Hall Crowder, Frank Allen Dennis, and Archie Boone. They will discuss faith and opinion, the meaning of freedom, and the blessings and hazards of freedom. And the audience will be participating, and what a high quality audience it promises to be.

Ouida and the children will accompany me to California to attend the North American Christian Convention in Anaheim, July 23-26. We are driving visiting individuals and churches along the way, and we have the likes of Grand Canyon and Disneyland on the agenda. At the convention I will present a paper to the theological forum on the authority of the Bible in the Restoration Movement and will address the college career group on conflicts in the Christian faith.

We will get back just in time, the Lord willing, for me to fly (without Ouida unfortunately) to the World Convention of Churches of Christ in Mexico City, July 30-August 5. This will be largely for *Fellowship* magazine, and I look forward to meeting disciples from all over the world. I am eager to be with brethren from Europe and South America, and especially from Australia and New Zealand, lands that I hope to visit before long.

I will have to hurry home to get in on the latter part of Camp Warren, conducted by the Water Street Church of Christ in Decatur, Illinois, where I will give lessons on highlights in the life of Jesus. Write to Jack Fleener, 23 Montez Dr., Decatur, IL. 62526. The dates are Aug. 4-10.

God granting, I shall go on to Jefferson, Indiana for the Lewisville Christian Fellowship, Aug. 12-16.1 will speak on Jesus and people. Write to Duval Means, 806 Spicewood Dr., Jefferson, IN 47130 if you are interested in this affair.

I have recently been to Hutchinson, KS, Arkansas City, KS, Denver, CO, Springfield, IL, Birmingham and Montgomery, AL and Nashville, TN in meetings in homes and with congregations, with many thrilling experiences that I will not be able to relate in detail. But I do hope to tell you of my trip to Texas Hill Country (LBJ land), with Ouida at my side, in my next travel diary.

Restoration Mind is the bound volume of this journal for 1971-72, and it contains a special series on the travel letters of Alexander Campbell. It is a 400-page book and is only 4.50. The five previous years are in single bound volumes, 1966-70 and are only 3.50. If you are interested in back copies, we suggest you get these volumes, though we do have loose copies available at 20 cents each.

One of the better minds among our folk of the last generation was R. L. Whiteside, who lived here in Denton much of his life. His daughter still lives here and has enjoyed great success in publishing her father’s works. These make for good, responsible study, and we recommend them to you. *Commentary on Romans* is the best known and only 3.00. *Kingdom of Promise and Prophecy* is a fine study of questions related to the kingdom, with generous quotations from Alexander Campbell. 2.50. *Doctrinal Discourses* treats sundry topics, soundly treated. 3.50. These are all hardbound volumes. The author was once president of ACC.

Francis Schaeffer believes that Genesis is a record of what really happened, not a collection of myths. You will appreciate his treatment of the origin of life, the universe, and man in his *Genesis in Space and Time* for only 2.25. While ordering get his *The Church at the End of the 20th Century,* only 1.95.

In the above news item about the unity forum in Nashville it should be mentioned that Pat Boone will speak on "The Unity of the Spirit" on night of July 4. But unless our printer gets with it this will not reach you in time to make a difference, though this is our third announcement of the forum.

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

The National Church Growth Research Center is being set up in Washington, D. C. by Dr. Paul Benjamin, recently president of Lincoln Christian College (Illinois), who leaving that Christian Church-related institution to direct it. Convinced that the clergy of the churches of the world will never be able to take Christ to the world, Dr. Benjamin hopes to arouse those in the pew to become effective witnesses through research done at the center. He believes there is a great need for a center for church growth, strategically located, from which can emanate a variety of services which would challenge, instruct and assist believers throughout the world in meeting the compelling demands for Christian advance. He described it as "a ministry of research and writing in American Church Growth."

One of our Churches of Christ in Denton County, Texas, not far from the one my family and I attend, has the "problem" of having the editor of our most controversial magazine in its assembly. Having only recently moved into our area, he honored this church by casting his lot with them. But for anyone who is *different* to be around ... Well, you know how it can be. The elders ruled that he would be welcomed but not used, not so much as to teach a class or lead a prayer. Ouida and I have been in meetings where this young brother has done both, and we can bear witness that few can pray and teach like that man. I heard a group of preachers up in the Midwest discussing this editor's talent. One of them declared that a presentation he gave on the prodigal son was the most moving thing he had ever heard. Ouida and I visited the congregation recently, and sure enough, there sat the editor with his family—allowed to sit, and I *presume* to give (fellowship, you know!), but not to speak or pray. Ouida and I thought of those innovative prayers that he has led at unity meetings, where he had us stand and look into each other's faces while he spoke to the Father, pleading for our love and oneness. But I had another thought: *they don't know*

what they're missing. And so my mind wandered while some dear brother droned through a stereotyped prayer, same cadence and same cliches and same generalities. And there sat a man with the rare gift, *very* rare in the Church of Christ, of knowing how to lead a congregation to the throne of God. Ah, but the high price we pay for our fears and hangups! It is a wonder that we don't drive away more people than we do. It can only be that they take heart that things are changing and that our narrowness is diminishing. And they are right! And thank God for the likes of that young editor, who keeps hanging in and trying to be part of the answer when it is not easy to do so. And I hazard the guess that God will hear his prayers, wherever uttered, whether the elders will or not!

In a recent issue of *Firm Foundation* the editor, Reuel Lemmons, observes that our church leaders should think twice before criticizing the cell groups that are meeting in homes across the land. He says this happens because our most talented people are "bored to death with having nothing to do." It is the unused and uninvolved people that are attracted to such gatherings, he points out, and the church would do well to get with it and provide a ministry for these people. "More creative thinking by elders and preachers that would personally involve every member of the church would do more to cure these abortive groups than an the criticism in the world". And he insists that this problem will not go away. "We have already lost a host of brilliant young men simply because they refuse to be sat on," he says, and he thinks we'll lose more if we do not face the facts and build a more creative ministry in our churches.

Four years ago the editor of *Gospel Guardian* listed 69 "issues" among our churches that more or less affect fellowship. He recently updated the list and the number is now 84, new additions including such "issues" as bus ministry, pant suits, tongue speaking, and women sitting in on business meetings. And he says the list is by no means exhausted, especially if he should list the *men* (preachers, I presume) who have become issues. He must be right about the pant suits, for another report has come my way of one of our congregations that is really having it out over this recent innovation. All this well illustrates how different we are in our likes and dislikes as well as in our doctrinal interpretations, and it should not take the wisest of men to see that we'll never be one on the ground of sameness of thought. But we can be one in Jesus, bless his Name, pant suits or no. (My own Ouida makes her own pant suits, elegant ones of various colors and designs that accentuate her femininity. All it would take for our anti-pant suit folk to change their ways would be to see Ouida in hers. Oh, yes, our sisters who have to work behind open desks acclaim them as a blessing from God.)

Editor James L. Herrell, in a recent issue of *The Disciple*, writes of the rise of fringe groups within the church, attributing this to our neglect of ministering the *whole* gospel. He says a case could be made for such anti-cleric groups as Jehovah's Witnesses on the basis of our neglect of the doctrine of the priesthood all believers. Teachers have turned

away from such biblical concepts as healing and spiritual rebirth, and so there are fringe groups that have emerged to take up the message we have abandoned.

Rafe Miller, minister to the University Place Christian Church in Champaign, Illinois, writing in *The Disciple* explains the name *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),* which is the official name of that part of our Movement. He was asked why the parenthesis could not be dropped and allow *Christian Church* to be the name. He feels that no church has the right to call itself "*the* Christian Church", for they are all Christian churches. Until the church upon the earth is truly one, we should denominate ourselves in keeping with conditions, and so while one is *Christian Church (United Methodist)* another can be *Christian Church (Presbyterian).* He also observes that Alexander Campbell preferred the name Disciple, while Barton Stone chose the name Christian. So in the Restructure Plan they managed to combine these in such a way as to present themselves in a manner consistent to their desired place in the Christian world, and so the name *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).*

A two-column spread appeared in the May 5 issue of the *Nashville Tennessean* of how the Radnor Church of Christ in that city is gung-ho for withdrawing fellowship from members considered unfaithful to the church and its teaching. No particular offense was cited, but the four elders of the congregation are on record for being in favor of a house cleaning. And they have already asked the other churches in the city for cooperation by not providing a haven for those excluded. One elder cited 1 Cor. 5, insisting that this "should have been practiced by Churches of Christ all along." He estimates that 50 or 60 of their members will be counseled and prayed with, and if they are not "restored" they will be withdrawn from. Apparently the purge is intended for those who attend irregularly, for one woman in the church is quoted as saying that she thought withdrawal was for the "horrible, horrible person" and not for the irregular attender. She added, "I'm afraid there's going to be a lot of new Baptists."

Speaking of the nomenclature "Disciples of Christ," C. S. Lambert of Dallas tells me he longs to see a sign outside one of our towns, beckoning people to church, that would read like this: *Disciples of Christ welcome you* would be across the top, followed by *all* the Restoration churches in that town, with Church of Christ and its address, the Christian Church and Disciples of Christ and their locations. Good Campbellite thinking, Chester!

The Bering Drive Bullets, a baseball team of the Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston, plays in the Brazos Church League, and as our people are wont to do, they are holding their own with the Methodists and Episcopalians.

Luther Norman is a 92 year old preacher. Looking back over 70 years as a minister, he recalled recently in the *Firm Foundation* of how he made 17.00 for five months of labor with one church back in 1903. He also provides a little history on the organ controversy. Once the instrument was installed in the building in San Marcos, Texas, one sister Driscol,

an aged woman, slipped in a window and with a hatchet chopped the organ to pieces. That shows that it takes a woman to get these issues settled! That might be one way to settle the matter these days: *smash em!* But things could get out of hand if such issues as the Sunday School and women teachers were settled in that manner!

Marvin Bryant, one of our specialists in converting "denominational" preachers, has recently reported the conversion of at least two more Baptists. One of them, a man in Bell Gardens, Ca., was "baptized into the Lord's body," Marvin tells us. The man was reared in a believing home, was immersed when he was 16, and has been a minister for 36 years among the Baptists. Nothing is said about the other Baptist preacher being rebaptized, also a man of long years of preaching. It is just as well that Marvin didn't do his work in the early days of our Movement, for he would have rebaptized the likes of John T. Johnson, Raccoon John Smith, Phillip Fall, Jacob Creath, Samuel Rogers, and a host of other Baptist ministers who took their stand for the ancient order. It did not occur to our pioneers to immerse immersed believers. Even poor old Alexander and Thomas Campbell would have to be "converted," for it was a long time after Elder Luce, a Baptist, had immersed them that they realized it was "for the remission of sins." I agree with Alexander Campbell that it is irreverent to baptize one who has already been baptized, unless per chance he was void of faith in Jesus at the time of his immersion.

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